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ON FINANCING CINEMATOGRAPHY

It is our aim to draw attention to and encourage thought and research on the problem of financing in the film industry, where new conditions and relations are emerging as a result of the technical revolution in the field of visual communication. We realize that we still have not got the conditions for a more comprehensive look at real solutions, which depend on many factors which will emerge in the near or distant future. In our opinion, however, just pointing out the problem, assuming we are on the right road, can help to find ways to resolve it.

Our examination of this problem is based on the following assumptions:

The sudden development of visual communication media changes the view that the so-called cinema film is the basic and main form of cinematography. We already have a complex cinematography which we define as *moving picture scenes* which are shown on film or magnetic reels in the cinema, but also on television, and, tomorrow, in the form of video-cassettes. Today, film accounts for as much as 80% of the television programme, for all that is expressed in the language of film and is not a live telecast is film! This greatly influences the position of the cinema film and existing relationships in film production.

Today, the production of programmes on celluloid or magnetic tapes is a huge industry. The question then arises as to how to secure the financing and the minimum average quality of such voluminous production?

We come to the following conclusions when considering the existing and future situation

in the production of *film picture* programmes for the cinema film and television in Serbia, for instance:

At present, 5 to 6, at the most ten full-length films and a few score short films are being produced and (financially speaking) can be produced in Serbia. In the coming decades this figure, according to the development plan of cinema film, can at most rise to several score full-length films and some one hundred short films. This means a maximum of twenty to thirty hours of programme per year today, or 50 to 60 hours of programme per annum in twenty years.

Today, Belgrade television's two channels are televising over 10 hours of programme a day, or over 3,600 hours per year. In the coming ten or twenty years, the Republic of Serbia is expected to televise several score of programme hours a day, and with the development of several local television stations which are in plan, this figure may go up to some one hundred programme hours a day, or over 36,000 programme hours per year.

If we bear in mind that, according to our definition of cinematography, 80% of the television programme today falls into the category of cinematography, for it represents scenes expressed in the language of film, then we can have an idea of the problems facing the new, complex cinematography, both in terms of financing and in terms of cadres and attaining certain artistic and cultural achievements in the tremendous number of products which are to be presented.

The problem is largely that of the relationship between society on the one hand, and the producers and presenters of visual communication programmes, on the other. It is a fact that in a large majority of countries, the cinema film today enjoys considerable assistance and protection from the State and society. (The percentage of this assistance in Yugoslavia averages as high as 65% of the production costs of a film).

Is this not just a drop in the bucket in comparison with the flood of programmes being produced which, as a rule, are supported by television subscriptions and commercials, and which, consequently, are far less expensive than the products of the cinema film? How to distribute this "drop"? Should it always go to the cinema film, when television offers a far greater level of communication? (Will this not lead, at the very least, to a relative reduction

and stagnation in the number of products of pure cinema film?!)

Where can one mobilize new means for such voluminous programme production, in the aim of preserving and saving a certain level of quality, in which society, sooner or later, must be very interested?!

Will the viewer ever need such a voluminous programme, given a higher living standard, and other programme offerings (tourism, sport, literature, theatre, etc.)?

All these and many other questions which unquestionably arise in this connection, seem to gear one's thoughts along the following lines:

1. Radical changes will unquestionably occur in the form and sources of financing. As there is no other solution, the only ones called upon and in a position to make a selection and invest a relatively high amount of the necessary means will be the broadest sections of the consumers, the viewers. The simple reason for this is that they are most directly concerned, they are the only ones, in this flood of offers, who can and must be able, if only in self-defense, to regulate the volume of production and financing, and to a certain extent, the quality of the products, which will be an incomparably more difficult task and which will be a lengthy and painful process, especially as quality is in reverse proportion to the quantity of production, which is unbridled and constantly growing. It is up to social and political systems to create the conditions for this sole possible alternative. The Yugoslav system is already placing the accent on the sovereignty of the direct beneficiary.

2. *Amateur film production* will probably play an important role within these altering relations, especially in view of the development of film literacy, local television stations, the development of film for educational needs, ethnic groups, etc. The production of such films, and their number is not negligible, will be practically free, which means that the beneficiary will actively join in production, and not stand by as merely a passive observer or financier.

3. The growing production of visual programmes will lead to the integration of the cinema film and television in the field of production, and to changes even in the esthetics of film. (Already one can discern the penetration of the documentary factor in feature films, which is unquestionably partially due to the influence of television!)

4. In our opinion, the first step should be the broad formation of cadres for the production of visual programmes at various levels. This would obviously be an extremely valuable investment which would greatly contribute to neutralizing the fear of a decline in programme quality, in reverse proportion to the rise in quantity.

We believe that more complex thought and research along the lines we have elaborated would contribute to the successful development of this field, which in terms of its form, ranks as an industry (the industry of pictures!), but in terms of its essence, increasingly ranks in the category of culture.



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